PRICE TWO CENTS.

THE

ELZEVIR LIBRARY.

A Semi-Weekly Magazine.

VOL. I. } FEBRUARY 20, 1883. { $2.00
No. 15. } { A YEAR.

[Entered at the Post-Office, New York, as Second-Class Matter.]

AMERICAN HUMORISTS;

WASHINGTON IRVING.

BY H. R. HAWEIS.

PROSPECTUS.

It is intended that each number of THE ELZEVIR LIBRARY shall contain a complete *literary gem*, a characteristic specimen of the best product of the brain of the author who is represented. The numbers taken together will form a unique cyclopedia of the world's choicest literature. Subscriptions received for any separate numbers. The 104 numbers of a year will contain not less than 2912 pages, and should that number be reached in less than a year, subscriptions at $2 will be considered as terminated.

TO CLUBS.—An extra copy free for a club of five; three extra for a club of ten.

TO DEALERS.—Trade supplied direct, or by the news companies. Uncut copies returnable.

JOHN B. ALDEN, PUBLISHER,
18 VESEY ST., NEW YORK.
P. O. Box 1227.

THE ELZEVIR LIBRARY.

"The cheapest of all the Libraries."—"Sunday Globe," Boston.
"Even in these days of cheap books this is wonderful."—"Daily Post," Pittsburgh.

The following have already appeared in THE ELZEVIR LIBRARY, and are sold separately at the prices affixed. All are *unabridged*, and are printed in type shown by these four lines, or larger.

1	Rip Van Winkle. By Washington Irving	2c.
2	The Burning of Rome. By Canon Farrar	2c.
3	The Words of Washington. His most celebrated papers	4c.
4	Life of Washington Irving. By R. H. Stoddard	6c.
5	The Sea-Serpents of Science. By Andrew Wilson	2c.
6	Enoch Arden. By Alfred Tennyson	2c.
7	The Motive and Habit of Reading. By Chas. F. Richardson	2c.
8	Life of Frederick the Great. By T. B. Macaulay	7c.
9	Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. By Shakespeare	7c.
10	Queen Mabel, etc. By Ellen Tracy Alden	3c.
11	Life of Sir Isaac Newton. By James Parton	2c.
12	World Smashing, etc. By W. Mattieu Williams	2c.
13	A Half Hour in Natural History. By S. H. Peabody	3c.
14	Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Complete. Illustrated	10c.
15	American Humorists—Irving	2c.
16	Life of Gustave Dore. By F. H. Norton. Illustrated	3c.
17	American Humorists—Oliver Wendell Holmes	2c.
18	The Cricket on the Hearth. Dickens. Illustrated	10c.
19	American Humorists—James Russell Lowell	4c.
20	American Humorists—Artemus Ward	2c.
21	American Humorists—Mark Twain	2c.
22	The Commentaries of Cæsar. By Anthony Trollope	15c.
23	The History of Herodotus. By George C. Swayne	15c.
24	Cicero. By W. Lucas Collins	15c.
25	The Deserted Village; The Traveler. Oliver Goldsmith	2c.
26	The Cotter's Saturday Night, and Other Poems. Robert Burns	2c.
27	How Lisa Loved the King. By George Eliot	2c.
28	Songs of Seven, and Other Poems. By Jean Ingelow	2c.
29	Demosthenes. By W. J. Brodribb	15c.
30	Highways of Literature. By David Pryde	10c.
31	Aristotle. By Sir Alexander Grant	15c.
32	The Indian Song of Songs. By Edwin Arnold	6c.
33	Plato. By Clinton W. Collins	15c.
34	Horace. By Theodore Martin	15c.
35	Life of Alexander H. Stephens. By Frank H. Norton. Illustrated	10c.

The entire series of "Ancient Classics for English Readers" 27 vols. heretofore sold at $1 each, are publishing one or more each week, uniform with the Cæsar, Herodotus, Aristotle, etc.

"*Marvelously cheap, yet beautifully printed.*"—MORNING STAR, Dover, N. H.

"*The greatest attraction in point of cheap and good reading that any publisher has yet offered.*"—THE MAIL, Toronto,

"THE ELZEVIR LIBRARY *surpasses in cheapness anything that we have ever met with. The issues are printed in good type on strong paper.*"—YALE COURANT, New Haven, Conn.

AMERICAN HUMORISTS.

I.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

FOREWORDS ON HUMOR AND WIT.

A FEW words on wit and humor in general; a few more on American wit and humor in particular; and a good many on the wit and humor of WASHINGTON IRVING, OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, ARTEMUS WARD, MARK TWAIN, and BRET HARTE.

I have read long and tiresome essays by HAZLITT and others, explaining the difference between wit and humor. I have lain awake at night thinking over the difference, and I have come to the conclusion—that there is none. I hasten to reveal this truth to the world because it has been such a comfort to me. Humor is the electric atmosphere, wit is the flash. A situation provides the atmospheric humor, and with the culminating point of it comes the flash.

The character of CARLYLE'S "Teufelsdroeckh" is perfectly steeped in a peculiar kind of dry and flowing humor, but when he says that England is composed of ten million of human beings—*mostly fools*, there is the flash. Out of such a tone of mind from such a humorous atmosphere, we may expect to draw a spark at almost any moment.

COWPER'S "John Gilpin" provides a series of situations from which we naturally have great expectations; and, in fact, at each turning-point there comes the inevitable flash of wit proper to the humorous situation. As the worthy citizen flies helplessly past the place where he should have dined—

> "'Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—Here's the house!
> They all at once did cry;
> 'The dinner waits, and we are tired:'
> Said Gilpin, '*So am I!*'"

"a hit—a palpable hit!"

There are some people who turn away from such light themes. They consider fun dangerous, humor frivolous, wit waste of time. They are wrong. I assert the dignity of wit, and I claim for it noble ends, for, rightly used, it is sensible, moral, recreative, and stimulating in a very high degree. PORSON said, "Wit is the best sense in the world." Everthing truly witty is a very nucleus of condensed thought—a sort of literary Liebig, an "extractum carnis" of sense. Analyze any "good saying" "*bon mot*," you will find it will bear sifting—thinking about, and will generally rivet upon the mind something worth remembering. A conceited poet once asked PORSON to read a new poem which he had just written, and tell him candidly what he thought of it. "Sir," said the great scholar, "your verse will be read when VIRGIL is forgotten, *but not till then!*" Was there no sense in that? "Doctor, how do you live to be so old and rich?" "By writing prescriptions, but never taking them," was the witty and very *sensible* reply. "Man," says a proverb, "leads woman to the altar, and there his

leadership ends." This is a truth which has doubtless been so often and so happily illustrated in the lives and experiences of the people whom I have the honor of addressing, that I need hardly do more than allude to it here.

I need not go far afield to prove that wit is a moral force. No one will deny that "Mr. Spurgeon's" wit has a great deal to do with his vast ministerial success, and that he has used it on the whole wisely and well. Indeed there have been few great preachers who have not made trenchant use of wit and satire. The great Reformation orators, not to speak of Cromwell's preachers, were notorious humorists. The modern French preachers, the Irish, and most of the Italians, especially in the south, are not deficient in pulpit humor—nor afraid to use it either.

One wet Sunday, ROWLAND HILL noticing some people who had taken refuge inside his chapel from the rain, remarked, "I have heard of people making a cloak of their religion, but this is the first time I have ever known them to make an umbrella of it." Indeed, a stroke of humor from the pulpit will not only arrest, but will often impress when even impassioned oratory would fall flat. If you cannot make men ashamed of doing wrong, you may often make them afraid of being ridiculous. A man who does not feel that he is sinful, may often be convinced that he is absurd.

But wit is not only highly moral, but extremely recreative and stimulating. The mind goes round normally one way, wit turns it round the other; the very process is refreshing. An old horse, who six days in the week was driven round and round in a

lime-kiln, was left to himself on Sunday, and how do you suppose he rested? It was observed that at a certain hour—corresponding to the time when he was usually put into harness—he got up and went round the other way. This set up a reverse action in his brain, and refreshed him. We all require to unwind ourselves, and wit is one of the most powerful unwinders.

Let me analyze wit. It always involves an exaggeration, a reversal of ideas, a glimpse of the incongruous or the impossible. When in dreams you see a mouse as big as a house, you are not surprised or amused, because in sleep you lose your sense of comparison; but a mouse as big as a house, or a blue-bottle as big as an ox, in a pantomime is a certain success. When the clown stands admiringly to watch the horses put through their ingenious paces by the flash groom with the long whip, and at last, after carefully ogling the quadrupeds, remarks to the audience, "It's astonishing what you can learn insects," the reversal of ideas is recreative, and our delight is genuine at suddenly finding a horse alluded to as a gnat or a moth. When Dickens tells us of a lady who was carried home in a "flood of tears and a sedan chair," we are all pleasantly affected by an immediate sense of the incongruous. When the proverbial showman produces a small skull, and assures the company that it is "the real skull of the poet BURNS *when* he was a little boy," the shock of the impossible falls upon us like a cold shower-bath. When he further exhibits a stuffed crocodile, and remarks, "This hexentric animal, ladies and gentlemen, in'abits a desert island seventy-five miles removed from either land or water," the

very naturalness of the sound makes the outrageous nonsense all the more agreeable.

Now to sum up: Humor is the atmosphere, wit the flash. Humor lies in the situation, wit in its culminating points. It is sensible, moral, recreative, and stimulating. It always involves a shock of some kind, either of exaggeration, reversal of ideas, a sense of the incongruous or impossible. Its dignity is vindicated, its nature analyzed.

American wit has three main roots. These roots seem part and parcel of the national character, and are inseparably connected with the early history of our American cousins.

First, I notice the shock between Business and Piety. That is always a fruitful source of comedy to outsiders. Those famous Pilgrim Fathers who went over in the *Mayflower*, to create a new civilization and conquer a new world, were singularly wide-awake as well as pious. They were martyrs to a religious idea, but they were keenly alive to the practical interests of real life. I have nothing to say against religion and business going hand in hand. The two occupy parallel but not necessarily antagonistic planes, and have, or ought to have, frequent side channels of communication; but the habits and instincts developed by each are too often practically irreconcilable, and sometimes flagrantly inconsistent. "John," said the pious grocer, "have you sanded the sugar?" "Yes, sir." "Larded the butter?" "Yes, sir." "Floured the ginger?" "Yes, sir." "Then come in to prayers."

The brisk competition between business and piety, together with the various cross lines of thought and feeling which it begets—derived no doubt from the

thrift and 'cuteness of the early settlers—underlies a good deal of the modern American wit. The Pilgrims were far too grim and grave to joke; but their descendants, who are fully alive to their peculiarities and weaknesses, whilst inheriting a full share of both, are not so particular. WASHINGTON IRVING'S skit on the Yankee lawyer who became a converted man upon seeing a ghost, and after that never cheated—"except when it was to his own advantage," is a fair thrust at that spirit which has the "form of godliness, denying the power thereof," and which, however morally deplorable, has an irresistibly comic side to it.

Another deep undertone of American humor is the forcible and national contrast for ever present to the American mind between the Yankee and the poor Red Man whom he has supplanted. WASHINGTON Irving and ARTEMUS WARD have both made great play with this element. The picture in "Knickerbocker" of the wily Dutch trader sitting down opposite the red man, and smoking gravely with him "the calumet of peace," listening to the poetical savage's interminable tirades of oratory *à la* FENIMORE COOPER, and puffing away gravely without understanding a word of it, but never omitting to put in a "Yah! mein Herr!" at each pause, with a stolid and Batavian gravity—that is a feature quite peculiar to and inseparable from the national life and humor.

Lastly, the contrast between the vastness of American nature and the smallness of man, especially European man, seems to be a never-failing source of amusement to Yankee humorists. Their general ability to "whip creation" turns largely

upon the bigness of their rivers, mountains and prairies, and the superior enterprise generated by these immensities. By one wit, Niagara is valued because it could put out "our" Vesuvius in "ten minutes." Our biggest rivers are to the Mississippi and Missouri as babbling streams, our lakes are mere ponds; even the Alps and Pyrenees begin to look puny; and as to fields and woods, they are as paddocks and shrubberies to the virgin forests and boundless prairies of yon mighty Transatlantic continent. The American visitor who was asked how he liked the Isle of Wight, is said to have replied, "It was well enough, but so dangerous;" and when asked to explain, he said the fact was the island was so small that when he got out of bed in the morning, he found himself in danger of tumbling into the sea!

To sum up the peculiarities of American humor:

First, there is the shock between Business and Piety.

Secondly, the shock of contrast between the Aboriginal and the Yankee.

Lastly, the shock of contrast between the bigness of American nature and the smallness of European nature, or, as for the matter of that, Human Nature itself outside America.

You will notice that I have only selected a certain number of American humorists; and when I published my list, people at the Royal Institution asked me, "Why do you omit JAMES, and CABLE, and LELAND, and HOWELLS, and so forth?"

I have noticed in life that whenever a man sets himself to do one thing, his friends always asks him why he did not do something else. In this case my reply was:

"I select those men, without prejudice to any others, who in my opinion suffice to embody the genius of American humor, as far as it has got."

Then I was asked: "Why begin with WASHINGTON IRVING?"

"Simply because WASHINGTON IRVING was the first considerable American writer."

"But why call him a humorist?"

"Because he *was* a humorist. He was a great deal more, but he was *that*. SHAKESPEARE and SCOTT were a great deal more, but they were humorists. I might deal with IRVING as an historian or a biographer or an essayist, but I leave these varied and important aspects on one side in order to deal with him as a humorist—the first humorist, the father of American humor."

I should now like WASHINGTON IRVING to step out of the historical canvas and salute you in person, before I dwell upon his characteristics,—the flashes of his wit, the atmosphere of his humor.

I like to dwell upon that genial, modest, quiet gentleman, roused only at times into bursts of overflowing fun; but often rippling on with a pleasant provocative humor, a ready sparkle, a quiet repartee, yet prone, too prone, to hide his light under a bushel, giving his best things out only to his best friends, and averse to all show or flattery, and even averse to fame. There never was any one who so carried the whole of himself in each of his writings. The charm of that personal wit and simplicity of character, not without a certain playful subtlety, is never absent. He seldom rises or falls. He is neither

more nor less than himself, and *that* is always delightful, sincere, thorough, and buoyant.

WASHINGTON IRVING was born on April 3, 1783, at New York. He died in 1859. His mother was English; his father was Scotch. He was named after WASHINGTON. He was once in a shop with his nurse, when WASHINGTON came in. The great patriot patted the little fellow on the head, and IRVING's connection with the savior of his country began and ended there. In school hours he feasted on travels and tales, and hated arithmetic. It is a remarkable and consoling fact that many great men have hated arithmetic. They have had many followers who have resembled them in nothing else. His health as a boy was not good, and he was sent on a voyage up the Hudson river. Judge KENT who heard him coughing, remarked, he "was evidently not long for this world."

He put up at an inn, which seems to have been far from an ideal hostelry, as he left the following affecting lines written up over the mantelpiece:

> "Here sovereign Dirt erects her sable throne,
> The house, the host, the hostess all her own."

In 1804 he sails for Europe, coughing as usual. The captain remarked, "That chap will go overboard." Having thus been twice killed by sympathetic strangers, he has the good fortune to be boarded by a privateer on the voyage, and the further luck to fall in with Admiral NELSON's fleet in the Mediterranean.

He hurries through Rome to London, catches a glimpse of the SIDDONS, and another of KEMBLE; and after some desultory attempts to write, in conjunc-

tion with his brother Peter, we find him back in New York in 1809, the publication date, by the way, of his famous "Knickerbocker Papers"—a little fact whice perhaps explains the singular indulgence with which he was treated by his elder brothers, who had gone into business.

Like other men of talent, IRVING took to the law, but the law did not take to him. He took also to the daughter of his law-coach, who took to him, but died at the age of eighteen. Was that his first, last love? The world is always curious about these things. "Tôt ou tard tout se sçait," says a French proverb. But the love-secrets of some men will never be known; IRVING may be one of those men.

Perhaps IRVING had no secrets; perhaps he had. A little sentiment leaks out here and there—a hint, a surmise, a possibility, perhaps a disappointment. He certainly was attached to the Foster family. He was an *enfant de la maison* there; perhaps some of us know what that means. The regard, friendship, admiration, and love of tender, gracious women; the culture, the repose, the relaxation, and sweetness of their society. The atmosphere in which passion might wake, but does not wake; where life and thought and feeling are quickened, heightened by the full, fervent, and exhilarating atmosphere of mutual appreciation, the companionship of true hearts, the happy ebb and flow of genial spirits! Yet with Emily Foster, it seems, there was something more than this; something which might have ripened into love—which perhaps did so ripen. I find, here and there, allusions to starlight whispers, long walks in the mountains, terrible carriage accidents in Alpine ravines. I find the young people

leaning over balconies together on Summer nights. I read of long evenings, and tea and music and quiet chats in cosy nooks. But, for various reasons, we are given to understand that marriage was not contemplated, one reason being that Emily married another. There was some pain about all this; the shadow of loss was over it—the weariness of separation, and that sad bowing to the inevitable which sometimes leaves a scar which all the mellowing influence of the reconciling years cannot wholly efface. But I anticipate.

IRVING'S attempts to get into harness turn out failures. Evidently the law won't do, and his brothers propose, with some diffidence, a little commercial arithmetic at the desk. To IRVING'S honor be it said that he never absolutely shirked this. He actually went through it, resignedly enough at times on a pinch; but his kinsfolk had the wit to trust his literary instincts, and so he appears before us at the age of twenty-nine, in 1812, as a gentleman of leisure, fond of society, much courted as a witty and genial friend, making a good figure in drawing-rooms. fond of traveling about, dallying at times with business which he really never understood, and looking after appointments which he never got.

IRVING took to England as a duck takes to water. He seems never happier than when getting together the elements of "Bracebridge Hall," which may be called the coronation of English country life. Something in our fields and woods, and village pastimes, and old manorial residences, with their old semi-despotic patriarchal ways of quaint hospitality and simple heartiness, even the ignorance and narrowness of provincial life, would be lighted up with flashes

of wit and sly side-thrusts of no unfriendly satire. And his touch is always light, yet firm and adequate. The Squire, Master Simon, Christy, the Housekeeper, are really alive, because thoroughly felt with the heart as well as seen with the eye.

Like some thorough Americans who are eager not to be mistaken for Englishmen, IRVING loved Englishmen. He liked our ways, he adored our ruins, he reverenced our traditions; and though a regular republican, if indeed he was a regular anything in politics, he swallowed the British constitution whole, and thought it quite right—for England. He associated naturally with our foremost men of letters, and what men we had then! The world was still talking about PORSON, BURKE, HORNE-TOOKE, who had but recently passed away. ROGERS had known them, and in London society one got the everyday chat of men like BYRON, the DUKE OF WELLINGTON, WALTER SCOTT, MOORE, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, LAMB; and later on, DICKENS, BULWER, HARRISON, AINSWORTH, TENNYSON, and BROWNING. He delighted in old ROGERS, at whose famous breakfasts he met the author of "Waverley," obliging enough to tell him that he was like SWIFT and STERNE; JEFFREY, that critical swashbuckler, that Leo Fulvus, who for his good friend IRVING would hide his fierce claw, and "roar as gentle as a sucking dove," over "Knickerbocker" in the *Edinburgh Review;* TOM MOORE, who patted him on the back, laughed at him for shutting up in mixed company, and said he was "not strong as a lion, but delightful as a domestic animal;" Mrs. SIDDONS, who read his works with emotion, and remarked twice when she met

him, and each time with her grand tragedy air, "Mr. IRVING you made me cry!"

IRVING was a free lance in literature; anything like business bored him. He was delightfully desultory, and yet capable of sustained effort, as in his life of WASHINGTON or COLUMBUS, where his heart went with the work. When he wrote merely for money, as in the life of MAHOMET, he crammed conscientiously, and was simply dull. He hated magazine-editing, and loved magazine-writing. Full of amiable inconsistency, he disliked politics, yet lived to be Secretary of Legation at London and Ambassador at Madrid. If anything, he was a republican, yet had an excessive admiration for NAPOLEON BONAPARTE. He respected the English monarchy, but described GEORGE IV. as a bloated sensualist, and a mere "inflation of sack and sugar," which must have gratified the gentle soul of THACKERAY.

In 1818 the firm of IRVING BROTHERS failed, and we find brother WASHINGTON, who had little to do with the firm or the failure, characteristically refusing a good Government appointment, and buckling to, manfully, pen in hand, to make both ends meet. In 1819 he offers MURRAY the publisher his famous "Sketch-book," which, owing perhaps to a strong recommendation from WALTER SCOTT, is all the more eagerly accepted. Soon afterwards he leaves London for Paris, Aix, and Wiesbaden. His health seems indifferent; but, it must be added, he appears at this time—he was thirty-six—rather indifferent to his health. He complains of inability to write, but under the circumstances that was not surprising

"I am writing with a bewildered head and feverish hand, having *returned at almost daylight from a fancy ball at the British Ambassador's.*"

Many people have felt like IRVING under similar circumstances, who have not resembled him in much else. The fact is, his books, which were the first of their kind—the "roundabout kind"—were by this time a good deal read, and IRVING was a good deal courted in polite society. His genial modesty, his kindly heart, his honorable life and gentle manners, endeared him to a large circle of friends; whilst his delicate humor, never quite at command or under control, often made him a charming companion. LONGFELLOW speaks of his "playful wit," "his sunny temperament," and "his open heart." But he was soon chilled, and easily depressed, though apt to recover himself rapidly. He was very sensitive to criticism, and not very tolerant of correction.

In 1827, at the age of forty-four, we find him in Spain. He loved Spain. Some of his best work was done there. The precincts of the Alhambra never failed to inspire him with lovely images and inexhaustible topics of romance. There he wrote his best stories, told his best anecdotes and exhumed from those archives, in which Mr. FROUDE has since labored so admirably, the materials for some of his most careful historical work. In 1829 he was Secretary of Legation at St. James'; in 1831 Chargé d'Affaires. In 1832 he returned to America, and seems to have got into a most wretched and dejected state, whether from ill health, disappointed affection, or sense of diplomatic inefficiency, we cannot tell. All through his biography we find these desponding moods from time to time recorded, but often without comment or explanation.

On his return to America he was received with open arms. His literary fame had preceded him—

but IRVING was a bad popular idol. He hated public speaking; refused to address the Lyceum; and even in private gatherings of friends, this most' genial of men viewed the company with a jaundiced eye the instant that he became aware that a speech was expected from him. "That Dicken's dinner—that Dicken's dinner!" he often said, with a memorial shudder: he had broken down miserably on that occasion, and never forgot the humiliation.

In New York "his time was cut up," he says, "like chopped hay." He seemed to pine for rest and quiet. In 1834 he made a tour in the prairies, and ended by settling down (he was now fifty-three) at Sunnyside, his country farm, with his sister and her children. Here comes out that passionate love of open-air country life which seems to be planted in the breast of every true American, and lies deeper down even than his love of commerce and "Stores." We see it in the regrets of the great President WASHINGTON who gave up so much when he left his farm, his horses, his crops, his fishing and hunting, for the troubled life of a revolutionary camp. We find it in the pages of EMERSON, who was never tired of the "refulgent summer, in which it is luxury to draw the breath of life in the midst of the fields spotted with gold and crimson fire." In LOWELL, who can hear—

> "The slender clarion of the unseen midge;"

and mark how—

> "The rich milk-tingeing buttercup
> Its tiny polished urn holds up,
> Filled with ripe summer to the edge."

In WARD BEECHER, whose rarest smiles are derived from the corn-field, the flower-garden, seed-

time and harvest. In LONGFELLOW, who so loves "the murming pines and the hemlocks," the "little squirrel," "the wild roses of the promontories," and "the incessant sobbing of the sea." In BRYANT, who comes to us—

> "Shaking a shower of blossoms from the shrubs,
> And bearing on their fragrance. So he brings
> Music of birds, and rustling of young boughs,
> And sound of swaying branches, and the voice
> Of distant waterfalls."

IRVING indulges even in bucolics. He writes to his niece: "You must contrive to come up soon, if only to see my new pigs." But from such delights he finds himself, in 1841, "roughly, rudely summoned by a heartless destiny." He leaves his roost at Sunnyside for the post of Ambassador to Spain. "It is hard—very," he writes, whimsically, "yet I must try to bear it!" With touching recollections of rustic folds and bleating of sheep about his native hills, he observes that "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;" and his one idea seems to be to go to Madrid and come back with money, "and put up as many weathercocks as he pleased," all over the farm.

His stay at Madrid is marked more by delightful letters than recondite policy. We hear all about the little Spanish queen, only thirteen, and her younger sister, and the ambassador seems chiefly occupied at court in "conjuring up nothings to say to little girls. This," he adds, "is the whipped syllabub of diplomacy." Then there was the wicked old queen-mother, CHRISTINA, who had such charming manners and was always up to mischief; and the little nieces were never tired of hearing about

what the princesses and great court ladies wore, and how they looked, and what they said and did. In short, the ambassador's attention, if we may trust his own letters to the little girls at home, must have been largely devoted to bonnets and ribbons, Spanish lace, and such-like things, in which advanced and learned audiences at the Royal Institution can hardly be expected to take much interest. But the poor little dears at the farm, far away by the Hudson River, knew no better, and doted on the good uncle's gorgeous talk about Spanish finery and court trappings. And what an uncle that was! How great and important! how kind, and simple, and loving, and tender! I think all good men love children—as THACKERAY says all good women love match-making. With UNCLE WASHINGTON it was always "his dear, darling, restless little Kate," or "that pebble-hearted little woman," and he was ever "longing to return to his little flock at Sunnyside," and "put up those weathercocks."

In Spain he passed his time between literature, diplomacy and the gout; but after suffering many things at the hands of many physicians, in 1845 his health seems to have taken a turn, and he chronicles this welcome improvement with a characteristic exclamation of gratitude:

"God bless those surgeons and dentists! May their good deeds be returned upon them a thousandfold! May they have the felicity in the next world to have successful operations performed upon them to all eternity!"

But the home hunger now became irresistible. From the midst of the gay court at Madrid the ambassador writes:

"I long to be once more at dear little Sunnyside, while I have yet strength and good spirits, to enjoy the simple pleasures of the country, and to rally a happy family group once more about me."

In 1846, at the age of sixty-three, he leaves the Spanish capitol, and returns, full of honor, fame, and not without fortune to his native land.

His public life was virtually at an end, and a life of more variety and less exciting incident can scarcely be imagined. He was familiar with Paris and London; Scotland, Germany, Switzerland, and Spain he had traveled through in turn. Everywhere he had been received by the *elite coteries* of fashion, of literature, politics, arts, and sciences. He was on terms of more than diplomatic intimacy with crowned heads, but he delighted most in many humbler associations. He knew the theatre and the counting-house, the rural life of England, the delights of Alpine adventure, the prairies and happy hunting-fields of wild Arkansas. He had mingled in civic fêtes and popular celebrations. He was regretted in London, Paris, and Madrid, and beloved in New York and Boston; yet, amidst all these varied scenes and tempting situations, he remained unspoiled—simply the kind brother, the idolized uncle, the quiet literary gentleman longing for his roost at Sunnyside by the Tappan Sea.

Washington Irving certainly retired on a competency. As ambassador of course he received a liberal salary, and his expenses in Spain could not have been very great. His English copyrights alone won him $12,217, and his other literary earnings about $24,500 dollars, making in all a literary life-work which cannot be estimated at less than $36,717.

His declining years were spent in revising, re-editing, and collecting his scattered essays into miscellanies, and in writing the "Life of WASHINGTON," in four volumes. He gives us a peep of himself now and then, trudging about his farm, or:

"Dozing over a book, girls all silently sewing around me."

But he was afflicted, like all men of literary ability, with the peculiar penalties of such greatness. His correspondence was oppressive:

"All sorts of letters from all sorts of people." "They tore his mind from him in strips and ribbons."

And then there were no post-cards in those days and people had not mastered the brief slap-dash style of reply, but were still long-winded, stately, and verbose. But what to do with all these post pests, numerous as summer gnats at sunset, it was hard to say. Now it is a lady-writer, who has "some poems" she wants to publish; another request from IRVING just "one" original thought; another inquires after "the exact place where RIP VAN WINKLE went to sleep in the Kaatskill Mountains;" and:

"Each letter is a cobweb woven across your nose." "The bores of this world," he exclaimed, "are countless!"

Surprising to say, that, like the DUKE OF WELLINGTON, he answered most of these boring missiles.

"A man as he grows old," he remarked to his nieces, "must take care not to grow musty or fusty or rusty—an old bachelor especially."

In 1853 the clock of time has struck seventy. It finds him still hale and hearty, but the shadows are lengthening.

He surprises himself going through that strange inevitable routine that awaits every one of us if we live so long. He sits with the old ladies with whom he had danced fifty years before; watches the little belles of six or thirteen; and marks out his own quiet resting place in the neighboring churchyard. His passion for horse exercise often got him into trouble, and he had eight or nine very narrow escapes. Like many active old men, he continued from habit, perhaps pride, to take enterprising rides across country, when the response of nerve and muscle had become too slow to make such feats quite safe. At seventy-two, he was thrown from a favorite but over-spirited animal called "Gentleman Dick," alighting upon his head.

"My horse became very rhetorical; he tried," so he writes to a friend, "to shut me up like a telescope."

He gets over his fall; but the inevitable cough, that familiar precursor of natural collapse, now appears. He has a great longing to finish his "Life of WASHINGTON," but seems conscious of failing powers. In writing the last volume, he says, "I could see how it ought to be done, but could not do it." Yet the book is vigorous enough and able to the close. So his life wore peacefully away. Presently comes the sleeplessness and low spirits, against which he struggles manfully. But IRVING had met the enemy who was to throw him at last. Yet throughout his illness a certain Diedrich Knickerbocker humor never forsook him.

"Getting ready to go," he said; "shutting up doors and windows."

And to his niece one morning, who asked him how he felt—

"I am apt to be rather fatigued, my dear, with my night's rest"—

which reminds me of the old lady who thanked God, and was sorry to say "she enjoyed very bad health!"

One night, late in the autumn of 1859, his favorite niece Sarah came in, as she was wont, to smooth his pillow before leaving him with that worst of companions, a restless solitude. "When will this end?" he said, half out loud. She turned suddenly to look at him. But the "end" had already come. He fell forward, with his hand pressed upon his heart, and in another moment WASHINGTON IRVING, the accomplished writer, the genial humorist, the illustrious citizen, had ceased to breathe.

I am not here dealing with IRVING the historian, biographer, or mere tale-teller, but mainly with IRVING the humorist. As such, I notice that he had the singular fortune to write before all the good jokes had been made. He is the first of the American humorists, as he is almost the first of the American writers; yet, belonging to the New World, there is a quaint Old World flavor about him. He is refreshingly deliberate; never in a hurry. Like BYRON'S "gentleman" he "never perspires." He takes his time, and tells you his story in his own way. The most delightful of gossips, the most ingratiating of "Roundabouts."

There is a good deal of the "Guardian," "Tatler," "Spectator," and old coffee-house wit and wisdom about him. But though sometimes gossipy, he is never flimsy, like so many of our modern magazine writers of "padding." He knows how to be solid, to choose his words, to look all round his thoughts, to have thoughts that will bear looking at. His wit

is never forced; he is seldom on the broad grin. In him, indeed, are germs of an American humor since run to seed in buffoonery; but he is never outrageous—always within delicate bounds. His fun never goes mad, but is in excellent subordination to his narrative or discourse. His wit plays about his subject like summer lightning. His laugh, or more often his grave smile, rises naturally, and is never affected; he is never strained or flashing, but often full of a deep and pathetic purpose; and his jokes when they come, seem woven into the very texture of his style, instead of sticking up outside like a cocked hat! We have seldom the rollicking fun of DICKENS, but often a touch of his tenderness. It is the satire of SWIFT, without his sour coarseness. The grace of STERNE, without his sham sentiment. The delicate flavor of CHARLES LAMB, without, however, the sly but severe bite of LAMB'S satire.

The chief fountains of IRVING'S humor are his "Sketch-book," containing the famous story of "Rip van Winkle," "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and the incomparable narrative of "The Headless Horseman." "Bracebridge Hall," with its genial "Bachelor Confessions;" its "Culprit," warm with the life-blood of humanity and gentle pity; and its unique story of the "Stout Gentleman," which was so admired by CHARLES DICKENS.

The Knickerbocker's comic "History of New York," of which I shall give you a few specimens; and "Wolfert's Roost," with its sketches in Paris, and general literary sweepings up. We have no right to complain. Towards the end of his life, a man will often publish odds and ends that *he* does not think much of himself, but which he knows the public

will be glad to buy, because *it* thinks much of him.

If I ask what is the secret of IRVING'S power, I find it to lie in a certain quiet absorption and concentration. He identifys himself absolutely with whatever he is about; a man is always attractive and interesting if he will do that. As a consequence, we get a photographic minuteness of detail, the graphic points always being instinctively selected for the high lights. He describes what he sees in his mind's eye, but his vision is clear and his observation accurate, down to the hue of a ribbon or the curl of a periwig. Along with this object-painting goes the quaintest choice of adjectives and substantives, appropriate to the variety and vigor of the image evoked. He is full of pithy wit and terse sayings, meditative occasionally, but not retrospective or metaphysical; invariably graphic, scenic, objective, rousing an image which we usually recognize, and are generally glad to meet with.

But there is nothing so dull as a description of why and how a thing is written, especially when you can have the thing itself. I will, therefore, pick out a few bright specks, and present you with some characteristic flashes of his wit, and then proceed to the graver task of suffusing you with at least two atmospheres of his humor, which I may as well describe at once as the *Moral* and the *Ordinary*.

First for a few specimens of the bright specks of color, the flashes of wit, the pithy hits. WASHINGTON IRVING'S portrait gallery would be a good subject for DU MAURIER'S pencil. Who has not had the misfortune to sit next—

"The dinner-out of first-rate currency when in town, who has been invited to one place because he has been seen at another?"

Who does not number amongst his acquaintances the widow of no particular age—

"Free, rich, disconsolate?"

Pages of description could do no more for her. The felicity of the adjectives recalls POPE'S grapic use of substantives in describing a lady's boudoir-table—

"Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, *billet-doux*;"

or here we have the once inevitable but now less frequently to be met with social nuisance—the young lady in or out of her teens, who was always invited after dinner,

"To skylark up and down the piano."

The coachman—a type unhappily not yet extinct amongst us—who only drives out—

"When he thinks proper; not when you want the carriage but only when, in his opinion, it is good for the cattle."

And who has not met, coming down Bond Street or Regent Street just at the most crowded part of the afternoon, the middle-aged spinster, carefully leading by a string which gets round everybody's legs—

"The fat spaniel, Zephir, who is fed out of all shape and comfort?"

When ere I take my afternoon walks in St. James', or lounge down "the sweet shady side of Pall Mall, with a couple of dukes," as THACKERAY used to say, I can see, looking out of their bow winnow, these club bores, which IRVING hit off long before the historian of snobs.

"The men from India, who come home burnt out with curry, touched with the liver complaint; who are so tediously

agreeable in each other's society, with their ancient talk about the policy of Lord Ellenborough, the condition of the Punjaub, and the battle of Mulligatawny."

And who, as he wanders in the London season from drawing-room to drawing-room, is not familiar with the—

"Look of the man who has the oppressive burden of providing other people's amusement on his mind?"

But these are squibs, and IRVING can burn his wit as long as a Roman-candle when he pleases. What a bright jet of sustained and scintlilating wit is that description of the old country gentleman, in the old parish church!—

"Who thought that religion belonged to the Government party, and was a very excellent thing, and ought to be kept up. When he joined so boldly in the service, it seemed more by way of example to the lower orders, to show them that, though so great and wealthy, he was not above being religious. 'As I have seen,' added Irving, 'a turtle-fed alderman swallow publicly a basin of charity soup, smacking his lips at every mouthful, and pronouncing it excellent food for the poor.'"

I pass from these flashes, and enter into what I may call some of the humorous atmospheres of his mind. When we suffuse ourselves with these, when we are caught in the meshes of his mood, we seem to come into closer and more continuous contact with his genius. We are sensible of his power to influence, to impregnate, to inspire us with sympathy, indignation, disgust; his piercing disclosure of shams; his pity for the oppressed and fallen; his sense of justice, his eagerness to strike a blow for the Right, whilst utterly holding up to ridicule and contempt the Wrong! This you will lay to heart, and be often reminded of Porson's dictum, that "wit is the best sense in the world."

KNICKERBOCKER'S "History of New York" illus-

trates all the above qualities on a large scale. The story of the early American settlers naturally possesses an undying interest for all Americans. DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER'S comic history is a feat of playful and sustained satire, as far as I know without a parallel. It is a fine example of the moral employment of humor. Whilst you are kept in a constant simmer of laughter, you are reminded in every page that the writer has something to teach, if not to preach—something which you are to lay to heart; and when you close the book, through all the "good things" and "witty episodes" rings out the deep undertone of mournful rebuke and solemn warning. I might cull, by the way, a good deal of quaint and severe wisdom, which by no means applies to New York alone or to KNICKERBOCKER'S time merely. His account of diplomacy is edifying enough.

"It is," he says, "a cunning endeavor to obtain by peaceful manœuvres and the chicanery of cabinets those advantages which a nation would otherwise have wrested by force of arms; in the same manner as a conscientious highwayman reforms and becomes a quiet and praiseworthy citizen, contenting himself with cheating his neighbors out of that property which he would formerly have seized with open violence."

The following description of a treaty is good—good enough, alas! for even these enlightened times:

"Treaties at best are but complied with so long as interest requires their fulfillment. Consequently, they are virtually binding on the weaker party only; or, in plain truth, they are not binding at all.

But perhaps the wittiest and saddest pages of KNICKERBOCKER are those in which he relates how the Dutch settlers turned the Red Indian out of his happy hunting-fields, stole his pastures, and appropriated his goods and chattels, with a full statement of the wise and moral reasons for so doing. Under cover of pretended defence, we have here a complete *exposé* of the unscrupulous manner in which the European invader stole the land, and the unblushing arguments which he used in his defence. The question was:

"What right had the first discoverers of America to land and take possession of a country without first gaining the consent of the inhabitants, or yielding them an adequate compensation for their territory? . . . The first source of right was DISCOVERY. For as all mankind have an equal right to anything which has never before been appropriated, so any nation that discovers an uninhabited country, and takes possession thereof, is considered as enjoying full property and absolute, unquestionable empire therein."

The next thing, of course, is to prove that America was totally uninhabited by man.

"This would at first appear to be a point of some difficulty, for it is well known that this quarter of the world abounded with certain animals that walked erect on two feet, had something of the human countenance, uttered certain unintelligible sounds very much like language—in short, had a marvelous resemblance to human beings. But the zealous and enlightened fathers, who accompanied the discoverers for the purpose of promoting the Kingdom of Heaven, . . . soon cleared up this point, greatly to the satisfaction of his holiness the Pope, and of all Christian voyagers and discoverers. They plainly proved—and as no Indian writer arose on the other side, the fact was considered as fully admitted—that the two-legged race of animals before mentioned were mere cannibals, detestable monsters, and many of them giants; which last description of vagrants, since the time of Gog, Magog, and Goliath, have been considered as outlaws, and have received no quarter in history, chivalry, or song. Being thus satisfactorily proved to be of 'a most abject and brutified nature, totally beneath the human character,' it was clear to the pious invaders, that the aborigines, so far from being able to own property, had no right even to personal freedom; and, being mere wild beasts of the forest, should, like them, be either subdued or exterminated."

The next right was that acquired by CULTIVATION.

"It is true that the savages might plead that they drew all the benefits from the land which their simple wants required." But that only proved "how undeserving of the blessings around them; they were so much the more savage for not having more wants. It is the number and magnitude of his desires that distinguishes the man from the beast."

Further, it was in the name of CIVILIZATION itself that the land was taken from the Indians, for—

"Not only were these poor creatures deficient in the comforts of life, but, what was still worse, most piteously and unfortunately blind to the miseries of their situation. But no sooner did the benevolent inhabitants of Europe behold their sad condition, than they immediately went to work to ameliorate and improve it. They introduced among them rum, gin, brandy, and the other comforts of life; they

likewise made known to them a thousand remedies by which the most inveterate diseases are alleviated and healed; and, that they might comprehend the benefits and enjoy the comforts of these medicines, they previously introduced among them the diseases which they were calculated to cure."

But, of course, more important still was the introduction of CHRISTIANITY.

"It is true, the natives neither stole nor defrauded. They were sober, frugal, continent, and faithful to their word; but though they acted right habitually, it was all in vain unless they acted so from precept. The new-comers, therefore, used every method to induce them to embrace and practice the true religion—except, indeed, that of setting them the example."

Lastly, there came "the right by EXTERMINATION, or by GUNPOWDER." That was the most conclusive of all, and it is unnecessary to dwell further upon it.

"Thus," he concludes, "were the European worthies who first discovered America clearly entitled to the soil. And not only entitled to the soil, but likewise to the eternal thanks of those infidel savages having come so far, endured so many perils by sea and land, and taking such unwearied pains for no other purpose but to improve their forlorn, uncivilized, and heathenish condition; for having made them acquainted with the comforts of life for having introduced among them the light of religion; and, finally, for having hurried them out of the world to enjoy its reward!"

It would be difficult to give a more grave and pathetic summary of all the injustice and tyranny of the white man over the red; and I may add of the selfish iniquity of political annexation generally, when the annexers have no real rights to claim, and leave the annexed none to grant.

I pass from the *moral* to the *ordinary* atmosphere. The characteristic humor of "The Stout Gentleman," and the class to which that essay belongs, rises entirely out of the commonest of commonplaces. A country Inn, a Traveler, and a Sensation. But there is a depth of intense concentration thrown into the narrative which, slight as it may be, gives the episode rank with some of the best imaginative writing in our language. The mind colors all things. We carry about with us what we are to see and hear. When I read this famous "Stage Coach Romance" of "The Stout Gentleman," I am

actually at that wayside hostel in that gloomy month of November. "That wet Sunday in the country inn" is throughout a rare creation. The view from the window—"the place littered with wet straw, which had been kicked about by travelers and stable boys;" a corner of the yard, with its "stagnant pool of water surrounding an island of muck;" its "miserable, crestfallen cock, drenched out of all life and spirit, his drooping tail matted as it were into a single feather, along which the water trickled from his back," and so on for another admirable two pages, full of minute photography. A flash of relief comes with the arrival of the stage-coach, which deposits its freight, and whisks off again in the wet. Our traveler now saunters listlessly to the almanac hanging up in the inn parlor, and, looking at the month, reads a direful prediction, stretching from the top of the page to the bottom, through the whole month: "Expect — much — rain — about — this — time!" I cannot hope to paraphrase what follows:

"I was dreadfully hipped. The hours seemed as if they could never creep by. The very ticking of the clock became irksome. At length the stillness of the house was interrupted by the ringing of a bell. Shortly after, I heard the voice of a waiter at the bar, 'The Stout Gentleman in No. 13 wants his breakfast. Tea and bread and butter, with ham and eggs; the eggs not to be too much done.'

"In such a situation as mine every incident is of importance. Here is a subject of speculation presented to my mind, and ample exercise for my imagination. I am prone to paint pictures to myself, and on this occasion I had some materials to work upon. Had the guest upstairs been mentioned as Mr. Smith, or Mr. Brown, or Mr. Jackson, or Mr. Johnson, or merely as '*gentleman in No.* 13,' it would have been a perfect blank to me—I should have thought nothing of it; but 'The Stout Gentleman!'—the very name had something in it of the picturesque. It at once gave the size; it embodied the personage to my mind's eye, and my fancy did not rest.

"He was stout, or, as some term it, lusty; in all probability, therefore, he was advanced in life, some people expanding as they grow old. By his breakfasting rather late, and in his own room, he must be a man accustomed to live at his ease, and above the necessity of early rising; no doubt a round, rosy, lusty old gentleman.

"There was another violent ringing. The Stout Gentleman was impatient for his breakfast. He was evidently a man of importance; 'well-to-do in the world;' accustomed to be promptly waited upon; of a keen appetite, and a little cross

when hungry. 'Perhaps,' thought I, 'he may be some London alderman; or who knows but he may be a member of Parliament?'

"The breakfast was sent up, and there was a short interval of silence; he was doubtless making the tea. Presently there was a violent ringing; and before it could be answered another ringing, still more violent. 'Bless me! what a choleric old gentleman!' The waiter came down in a huff. The butter was rancid, the eggs were overdone, the ham was too salt. The Stout Gentleman was evidently nice in his eating; one of those who eat and growl, and keep the waiter on the trot, and live in a state militant with the household."

The smart hostess, after scolding the servants, sends up another breakfast, which appears to be more graciously received. Then the bell rings again. The Stout Gentleman wants the *Times*, or the *Chronicle*. Was he a Radical or a Conservative? Who could he be? "Rain—rain—rain! I now read all the advertisements of coaches and hotels that were stuck about the mantelpiece. . . . I wandered out, not knowing what to do, and ascended again to my room."

"I had not been there long, when there was a squall in a neighboring bedroom. A door opened and slammed violently; a chambermaid, that I had remarked for having a ruddy, good-humored face, went downstairs in a violent flurry. The Stout Gentleman had been rude to her.

"This sent a whole host of my deductions to the deuce in a moment. This unknown personage could not be an old gentleman; for old gentlemen are not apt to be obstreperous to chamber-maids. He could not be a young gentleman; for young gentlemen are not so apt to inspire such indignation. He must be a middle-aged man, and confoundedly ugly into the bargain, or the girl would not have taken the matter in such terrible high dudgeon. I confess I was sorely puzzled.

"In a few minutes I heard the voice of my landlady. I caught a glance of her as she came tramping upstairs. her face glowing, her cap flaring, her tongue wagging the whole way. 'She'd have no such doings in her house, she'd warrant! If gentlemen did spend money freely, it was no rule. She'd have no servant-maids of hers treated in that way, when they were about their work; that's what she wouldn't!'

"As I hate squabbles, particularly with women, and above all with pretty women, I slunk back into my room, and partly closed the door; but my curiosity was too excited not to listen. The landlady marched intrepidly to the enemy's cidadel, and entered it with a storm; the door closed after her. I heard her voice in high windy clamor for a moment or two. Then it gradually subsided, like a gust of wind in a garret; then there was a laugh; then I heard nothing more.

"After a little while, my landlady came out with an odd

smile on her face, adjusting her cap, which was a little on one side. As she went downstairs, I heard the landlord ask her what was the matter; she said 'Nothing at all, only the girl's a fool.' I was more than ever perplexed what to make of this unaccountable personage, who could put a good-natured chamber maid in a passion, and send away a termagant landlady in smiles. He could not be so old, nor so cross, nor so ugly either."

So the day wears on in such-like rambling and restless conjecture. "The continual meditation on the concerns of this invisible personage began to have its effect—I was getting a fit of the fidgets." The excitement is now steadily worked up, upon less than nothing at all, until it reaches the agony point, and the reader is finally released in fits of laughter.

"Dinner-time came, I hoped the Stout Gentleman would dine in the travelers' room, and then I might at length get a view of his person; but no! he had dinner served in his own room. What could be the meaning of this solitude and mystery? He could not be a radical; there was something too aristocratical in thus keeping himself apart from the rest of the world, and condemning himself to his own company throughout a rainy day. And then, too, he lived too well for a discontented politician. He seemed to expatiate on a variety of dishes, and to sit over his wine like a jolly friend of good living. Indeed, my doubts on this head was soon at an end; for he could not have finished his first bottle before I could hear him faintly humming a tune, and on listening, I found it to be 'God save the King.' 'Twas plain, then, he was no radical, but a faithful subject; one that grew loyal over his bottle, and was ready to stand by king and constitution, when he could stand by nothing else. But who could he be? My conjectures began to run wild. Was he some person of destinction traveling *incog.?* 'Heaven knows!' said I, at my wits' end; 'it may be one of the royal family, for aught I know, for they are all stout gentlemen!'

"The evening gradually wore away. The travelers read the papers two or three times over. Some drew round the fire, and told long stories about their horses, about their adventures, their overturns and breaking-downs. They discussed the credits of different merchants and different inns; and the two wags told several choice anecdotes of pretty chamber-maids and kind landladies. All this passed as they were quietly taking what they called 'night-caps,' strong glasses of brandy-and-water and sugar, or some other mixture of the kind; after which they one after the other rang for 'Boots' and the chamber-maid, and walked off to bed in old shoes cut down into marvelously uncomfortable slippers.

"There was only one man left; a short-legged, long-bodied, plethoric fellow, with a very large sandy head. He sat by himself, with a glass of port wine negus, sipping and stirring,

meditating and sipping, until nothing was left but the spoon. He gradually fell asleep bolt upright in his chair, with the empty glass standing before him; and the candle seemed to fall asleep too, for the wick grew long and black, and cabbaged at the end, and dimmed the little light that remained in the chamber. The gloom that now prevailed was contagious. Around hung the shapeless and almost spectral box-coats of departed travelers, long since buried in sleep. I only heard the ticking of the clock, with the deep-drawn breathings of the sleepy toper, and the drippings of the rain, drop, drop, drop, from the eaves of the house. The church bells chimed midnight. All at once the Stout Gentleman began to walk overhead, pacing slowly backwards and forwards. There was something extremely awful in all this, especially to one in my state of nerves—these ghastly greatcoats, these guttural breathings, and the creaking footsteps of this mysterious being. His steps grew fainter and fainter, at length died away.

"I could bear it no longer. I was wound up to the desperation of a hero of romance. 'Be he who or what he may,' said I to myself, 'I'll have a sight of him!' I seized a chamber candle, and hurried up to No. 13. The door stood ajar. I hesitated—I entered. The room was deserted. There stood a large broad-bottomed elbow-chair at a table, on which was an empty tumbler and a *Times* newspaper, and the room smelt powerfully of Stilton cheese.

"*The mysterious stranger had evidently but just retired.* I turned off, sorely disappointed, to my room, which had been changed to the front of the house. As I went along the corridor, I saw a pair of topboots, with dirty waxed tops, standing at the door of a bedchamber. They doubtless belonged to the unknown; but it would not do to disturb so redoubtable a personage in his den; he might discharge a pistol, or something worse, at my head. *I went to bed*, therefore, and lay awake half the night in a terribly nervous state; and even when I did fall to sleep, I was still haunted in my sleep by the idea of the Stout Gentleman and his waxed topboots.

"I slept rather late the next morning, and was awakened by some stir and bustle in the house, which I could not at all at first comprehend; until, getting more awake, I found there was a mail-coach starting from the door. Suddenly there was a cry from below, 'The gentleman has forgotten his umbrella! look for the gentleman's umbrella in No. 13!' I heard an immediate scampering of a chamber-maid along the passage, and a shrill reply, as she ran, 'Here it is! here's the gentleman's umbrella!'

"The mysterious stranger was then on the point of setting off. This was the only chance I should ever have of knowing him. I sprang out of bed, and scrambled to the window, snatched aside the curtains, and just caught a glimpse of the rear of the person getting in at the coach-door. The skirts of a brown coat parted behind, and gave me a full view of the broad disk of a pair of drab breeches. The door closed—'All right!' was the word; the coach whirled off; and that was all I ever saw of the Stout Gentleman!"

WHAT IS SAID OF

The Elzevir Library.

"THE ELZEVIR LIBRARY is perfection, and the poor will always be your debtor for the happy idea."—JOHN B. LYBROOK, Blacksburg, Va.

"Such efforts as this to popularize good literature are highly commendable."—THE GAZETTE, St. Joseph, Mo.

"We do not know where one can obtain so large an amount of choice and valuable reading matter for so small an amount of money."—COMMERCIAL, Caldwell, Kans.

"This is a new literary venture sure to command a large measure of success."—CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, Toronto, Canada.

"Too much cannot be said in praise of this effort to give good books to the multitude at merely nominal cost."—COMMONWEALTH, Boston, Mass.

"A deliciously charming collection of choice literature is furnished at fabulously low figures, and it is an ever increasing wonder how so much can be given for so little."—DAILY TIMES, Passaic, N. J.

"Think of procuring these immortal productions at 2 cents each!"—STAR AND COVENANT, Chicago, Ill.

"Decidedly the most unique venture in a literary way to which the public has yet been treated."—DAILY AMERICAN, Nashville, Tenn.

"A new and astonishing departure in the direction of cheap literature; the greatest attraction in point of cheap and good reading that any publisher has yet offered."—THE MAIL, Toronto, Canada.

"They are really gems that should be in possession of every family in the land."—RURAL CITIZEN, Jacksboro, Texas.

"Mr. Alden is proving himself a real benefactor, by this new, readable, and valuable publication."—REPUBLICAN, Waterbury.

"Alden has made the great books cheap as primers were a few years ago, and brought the genius of thinkers of the world to the door of the poorest boy or girl."—TRIBUNE, Sioux City, Iowa.

"Cheap, Cheaper, Cheapest, is the proper fashion in which to characterize this literary enterprise. Every specimen is some bright and important contribution to literature."—THE POST-EXPRESS, Rochester, N. Y.

'The first number of the ELZEVIR LIBRARY is about 'as big as a pinch of snuff,' but it contains Irving's Rip Van Winkle, carefully edited and well printed.—It is a miracle of cheapness."—THE IRON PORT, Escanaba, Mich.

Ancient Classics
FOR ENGLISH READERS

This famous and delightful series began publication in THE ELZEVIR LIBRARY, March 16th, 1883, and is also being issued in bound volumes as indicated. The volumes will be published at intervals of a few days till the series is complete.

1. Cæsar. By Anthony Trollope.
2. Herodotus. Geo. C. Swayne.
3. Cicero. By W. L. Collins.
4. Demosthenes. By Rev. W. J. Brodribb.
5. Aristotle. By Sir Alex. Grant.
6. Plato. By C. W. Collins.
7. Horace. By Theodore Martin.
8. Juvenal. By Edw. Walford.
9. Tacitus. By W. B. Donne.
10. Virgil. By W. L. Collins.
11. Homer: The Iliad. W. L. Collins
12. Homer: The Odyssey. By W. L. Collins.
13. Xenophon. Sir. Alex. Grant.
14. Æschylus. By the Bishop of Colombo.
15. Sophocles. By C. W. Collins.
16. Pliny. Church and Brodribb.
17. Aristophanes. W. L. Collins.
18. The Greek Anthology. By Lord Neaves.
19. Euripides. By W. B. Donne.
20. Livy. By W. L. Collins.
21. Ovid. By Rev. A. Church.
22. Thucydides. By W. L. Collins.
23. Lucian. By W. L. Collins.
24. Plautus and Terence. By W. L. Collins.
25. Lucretius. By W. H. Mallock.
26. Pindar. By Rev. F. D. Morice.
27. Hesiod and Theognis. By Rev. J. Davies.

Price of each number or volume: Paper, **15 cents**; cloth, **30 cents.**

The series will also be issued, bound three volumes in one, arranged in the order above given, in which form they will be sold at the following prices per volume. Cloth, **60 cents**; half Russia, **75 cents.**

The aim of this unique and scholarly series is to open to the unlearned English reader the beauties and treasures of classic lore, tell who the writers were, give some connected outline of the story they tell, present some of their most striking passages in choice English translation, and illustrate them from the wealth of modern scholarship. The separate volumes having never been sold at less than $1.00 each, they are now for the first time brought within reach of the mass of readers who need and delight in such pearls of literature.

"Each successive issue only adds to our appreciation of the learning and skill with which this admirable enterprise of bringing the best classics within easy reach of English readers is conducted."—NEW YORK INDEPENDENT.

"One of the most ingenious and successful literary enterprises of the day."—EVERY SATURDAY.